



SESSION 9

The Holy Spirit - Guidance in Life

Key takeaways for new believers:

- God promised His Spirit to all of us who turn from our sins and turn to God through believing in Jesus – all generations, all nations
- God's Spirit is **essential** for all aspects of our salvation – from when we are 'born again', to our being transformed day by day to be more like Jesus, to the future aspects like our resurrection and being with God for eternity

Part 1

identity

worship

- Review the story from session 8 (Community). Talk about students' experiences of retelling the story or contemplating the story since the previous session.
- Listen to or sing worship songs. Or spend some time meditating on 1 Peter 2:9 '*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.*'
- Allow participants time to discuss any pastoral / spiritual issues on their minds



CHRIST CENTRAL

Part 2 (story)

identity

mission

Transition: We saw in the last two stories how the Holy Spirit was given after Jesus ascended into heaven, how the early church started and a community of believers was formed. We saw how they met together to pray and worship and how certain believers, filled with the Holy Spirit, were appointed to oversee food distribution. The Holy Spirit was central to these stories. What relevance does the Holy Spirit have to 'our' story?

Cornelius' story (Acts 10)

In Caesarea, there was a centurion ... named Cornelius. Though he was not a Jew, he and all his family worshipped God. He prayed to God regularly and gave generously to those in need.

One day, at about 3pm, Cornelius had a vision of God in which he saw an angel who told him, "God has heard your prayers and seen your gifts to the poor. Now, send to Joppa for a man named Simon, also called Peter." With that, Cornelius sent two of his servants and a soldier to Joppa.

About noon the following day, while these men were still on their way to Joppa, Peter himself went up on the rooftop to pray. While there he fell into a trance and had a vision ... While he was still thinking about the meaning of the vision, God's Spirit told him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So, get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them for I have sent them."

So Peter went downstairs, greeted the men and listened to them as they explained why they had come ... Peter set off with the men the following day, together with some other believers from Joppa. When Peter arrived he found Cornelius waiting for him, together with his relatives and a large gathering of people.

Cornelius fell at Peter's feet in reverence, but Peter said, "Stand up, for I am only a man myself." Peter then continued, "You know that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or even visit a Gentile. But I had a vision from God just days ago in which God showed me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objections. Now, may I ask why you have sent for me?"

So Cornelius explained about the angel and his command to send for Peter. "Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

So Peter began to speak, "I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation those who fear him and do what is right." And with that, Peter began to recount the good news of peace with God through Jesus Christ. He told them of how Jesus, filled with God's Spirit and power, went about doing good and healing many, how He died on the cross but was raised to life again by God (an event witnessed by his followers), and how He had commanded His followers to preach the gospel and to testify that God had appointed Jesus to be the judge of the living and dead. He concluded with the assertion that everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through His name.

While Peter was still speaking, God's Spirit came on all who heard the message. The Jewish believers who had come with Peter were astonished to see that God's Spirit had also been given to those gathered at Cornelius' house (non-Jews). For they heard them speaking in different languages and praising God. Then Peter ordered that the new believers be baptised with water in the name of Jesus Christ and, at their request, Peter stayed with them for a few days.



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Questions for discussion

1. What do you like about this story?
2. What bothered you about this story?
3. What does this story show you about God? (Think in particular about God the Holy Spirit)
4. What does this story show you about people?

Part 3 (practice / takeaways)

identity

community

mission

5. What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
6. How will you remember this story?
7. Is there anyone you would like to tell this story to?

Talk to the new believers about the ways in which the Holy Spirit works in our lives – see list in notes. Consider printing out the list as an aide memoire for the believers. Encourage them to meditate on it.

Also encourage the new believers to read and meditate on the following verses:

- Joel 2:28-32
- 2 Corinthians 1:22
- Galatians 5:5
- Romans 8:26-27
- Galatians 5:22-23
- 2 Timothy 1:7

Pray that the believers will recognise the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and seek his help and guidance in all matters.

Pray that the new believers will internalise the story and share it with others.



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Notes for leaders

Here are some topics / questions that may come up during discussion, or which you should consider in preparing for this session:

- While the content of Peter's vision is critical for understanding that God's message was for both Jews and Gentiles, much of it has been excluded from the story above, in order to focus on the theme of God's Spirit being granted to all believers without condition.
- There are various stories in the book of Acts about believers receiving God's Spirit. But a number of these have unique features which one would not expect to see replicated in the lives of believers today. E.g. at Pentecost, tongues of fire accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but this was a one-off event that marked the birth of the church. In other accounts in Acts, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit seemed to be delayed and occurred when the apostles laid their hands on the new believers (Act 8). We have chosen this story because it shows how the Spirit is given automatically to new believers, even though speaking in tongues will not necessarily feature when every believer first receives God's Spirit.
- Is speaking in tongues to be expected when a believer receives God's Spirit for the first time?
 - Not necessarily! We have stories in the book of Acts that record the giving of the Spirit but do not record speaking in tongues at the same time (Acts 8:15-17, Acts 9:17), but equally there are accounts where the giving of the Spirit is accompanied by speaking in tongues (Acts 19:6 where the new believers spoke in tongues and also prophesied). Similarly, today it is quite common that there are no outward miraculous signs that accompany the Spirit being given to new believers.
- Is this giving of the Spirit the same as the gifts of the Spirit?
 - No. Although it may be accompanied by speaking in tongues (which is one of the spiritual gifts), it is not the same. The gifts are spiritual faculties or abilities which are given to believers by God's Spirit, and which are to be used for the building up of the church primarily.
 - See 1 Corinthians [12-14] for a fuller explanation of what the gifts of the Spirit are, their purpose and the framework in which they are properly exercised.
 - God's Spirit is given to all believers as a 'deposit' that guarantees our future inheritance. The spiritual gift(s) given by the Spirit differ among believers and are given at God's discretion, but all believers have God's Spirit in common.
- What about the fruits of the Spirit? How do they relate to the initial outpouring of the Spirit?
 - Again, the two are not the same. The fruits represent character traits that should be in increasing evidence as we grow as followers of Jesus, as we allow God's Spirit to work in us, transforming us to become more like Jesus.
 - See Galatians 5: 22-23 for a description of the fruits of the Spirit.
- What about 'baptism in the Spirit'?
 - This is a very deep subject, worthy of a much fuller discussion than can likely be had in this session.



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- However, it is worth noting that while God gives us his Spirit automatically when we believe in the work of his Son Jesus Christ and are saved, there are occasions when we may receive special equipping from the Spirit to carry out certain tasks or to withstand certain pressures or overcome certain trials.
- Water baptism is clearly not a prerequisite for the giving of the Holy Spirit, as this story indicates.
- What is the purpose of us receiving God's Spirit? (Consider printing out this list for the participants)
 - It is by the Spirit that we are re-born and renewed – see Titus 3:5, Hebrews 10:29, 1 Peter 1:2
 - The Spirit is the advocate sent by Jesus, to help all believers and be with us forever (as Jesus can no longer be physically) – see John 14:16-18
 - The Spirit is sent to teach us and to remind us of that Jesus said – see John 14:26
 - The Spirit will guide us into all that is truth and will tell us what is to come – see John 16:13, Acts 11:28, Acts 20:23, 1 Corinthians 2:10,13, Ephesians 1:17, 3:5, Colossians 1:18, 1 Timothy 4:1, 1 Peter 1:11, 2 Peter 1:21, Revelation 19:10
 - The Spirit empowers us to carry out God's mission on earth – see Acts 1:8, Acts 4:31, 2 Timothy 1:7
 - The Spirit gives us wisdom as we speak – see Acts 6:10
 - The Spirit encourages and strengthens Christians / the church – see Acts 9:31, Ephesians 3:16
 - The Spirit guides us to follow certain courses of action - see Acts 10:19-20, Acts 11:12, Acts 13:2-4, Acts 16:6-7, Acts 20:22, Acts 21:4,11,
 - The Spirit pours out God's love into our hearts – see Romans 5:5
 - The Spirit gives life - see Romans 8:2,10, 2 Corinthians 3:6, Galatians 6:8
 - The Spirit enables us to live lives that please God rather than ourselves – see Romans 8:13, 15:16, Galatians 5:16, Galatians 6:8, Philippians 3:3
 - The Spirit brings about our adoption as children of God and testifies to this – see Romans 8:15-16, Galatians 4:6
 - The Spirit intercedes for us when we don't know how to pray – see Romans 8:26-27
 - The Spirit gives spiritual gifts to believers - see 1 Corinthians 12:4 and chapters 12-14 in general, Hebrews 2:4
 - The Spirit acts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come – see 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5, Galatians 5:5, Ephesians 1:13, 1 John 4:13
 - The Spirit within us produces character fruit – see Galatians 5:22-23
 - Through the Spirit we have access to the Father – see Ephesians 2:18
 - The Spirit gives joy – see 1 Thessalonians 1:6